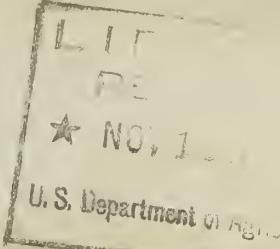


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THE NEW FEDERAL SEED ACT



A radio talk by W. A. Davidson, Agricultural Marketing Service, presented during the Department of Agriculture portion of the National Farm and Home Hour, Monday, October 2, 1939, over the NBC and 104 associated stations.

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KADDERLY:

Early next year a new Federal Seed Act will be in force in the United States.

It becomes effective on February 5, 1940 -- except for the provisions covering vegetable seeds in interstate commerce that won't go into effect until next August. But, as I said, this new Seed Act will be in operation for the most part in February. Between now and February hearings are going to be held in three different parts of the country -- hearings that will give all interested parties an opportunity to discuss the regulations to be set up under the Act.

Naturally, these regulations will be of great interest to all farmers who buy seeds -- all who produce seeds -- and all dealers who handle seeds. And that takes in a lot of territory. So we have asked the man who has been in charge of the enforcement of the old Federal Seed Act, to tell you what the New Act is all about. That man is W. A. Davidson of the Agricultural Marketing Service in the Department of Agriculture.

Mr. Davidson.

DAVIDSON:

Thank you, Mr. Kadderly, and Good Afternoon, friends.

First of all, let me say this new Seed Act will take the place of the Federal Seed Act of 1912. That Act was amended in 1916, and again in 1926, as some of you know.

Now, as to what the NEW seed act is intended to do. First, it will control the quality of all imported agricultural seeds and vegetable seeds, and it will restrict the importation of screenings and seeds containing noxious weed seeds. That is about half of what it is intended to do.

Second, the new Act will require complete labeling of seeds which enter interstate commerce. It will restrict the movement of noxious weeds in interstate commerce on the basis of the law of the States into which the seed is shipped. False advertising in interstate commerce is prohibited.

You will notice that considerable attention is given to noxious weed seeds. What do we mean by noxious weeds?

In general, noxious weeds are those plants the farmer can't control by ordinary good farm practices. They overrun his fields or become established so firmly that he can't grow his crops successfully. But to be specific, in the case of imported seed, these are the noxious weed seeds as defined in the Act: whitetop, Canada thistle, dodder, quackgrass, Johnson grass, bindweed, Russian knapweed, perennial sow thistle, and leafy spurge. Importations of seed containing seed of the plants I've just mentioned will be restricted.

(over)

DAVIDSON: (Continued)

I said a moment ago that this new Act will restrict the movement of noxious weed seeds in interstate commerce on the basis of the law of the States into which the seed is shipped. That needs some explanation. A weed might be noxious in northern States and may not be troublesome at all in southern States. Every State in the Union, except one, now has a seed law that names the weeds that are noxious in that State. These State seed laws also restrict the sale of noxious weed seeds. So this new Federal Seed Act merely accepts the state law with respect to seed going into the state.

Enforcement of the Federal Seed Act will be in the hands of the Federal Government, but it is the plan that the states will cooperate by carrying on the inspections within the state. In other words, the law will assure the farmer the kind of seed he asks for, providing the State in which he lives does its part in enforcing the act. For many years a number of States have had their own seed laws and are equipped to inspect and test seeds.

Now, how will all this help the farmer? In this way:

The label on a bag of seed should tell him exactly what is in that bag. That should be a help -- if he takes advantage of that labeling. Here's what I mean: the farmer will play his part if he buys on quality and chooses on the basis of what is shown on the label. The label is his protection. We're going to do everything we can to see that the seed conforms with the statements on the label. During the past several years there has been a big increase in the amount of seed transported from one State to another by itinerant truckers. Some of this seed isn't labelled at all. Or, if it is labelled, it is often misbranded. Neither the buyer nor seller knows the quality of the seed. There hasn't been any Federal control to speak of over this trade, but we believe this new law will give us a chance to do something. Deliveries have been made in interstate commerce directly to the farmer that state laws can't control. Some of these direct deliveries have contained seed not ordered by the farmer. The result is often a disappointing harvest. We hope that the new Seed Act will remedy this unpleasant situation and play an important part in encouraging the production and marketing of better seed.

Just one more thought. Some people have asked: "Will this new Federal Seed Act work a hardship on the legitimate dealers?" I don't think it's going to cause them any hardship. We are firmly convinced it will actually help them by reducing some competition that has been unfair. As a matter of fact, the comments from the trade have indicated that they are behind this act 100 percent.

So, to sum it up: we believe the law will improve the quality of the seed offered to the farmer for planting purposes and that it will minimize unfair competition in the trade.

KADDERLY:

Mr. Davidson -- before you leave the microphone -- a word or two about the hearings that are going to be held to give everybody a chance to discuss the regulations that will be set-up under this New Federal Seed Act: have the dates and places of these hearings been decided upon?

DAVIDSON:

Yes, they have. The first will be held in San Francisco on November first. The second hearing will be at Kansas City on November 6. The third, and final, hearing will be held here in Washington, D.C., on November 27. (Ad lib conclusion and repeat dates of hearings.)

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